The Saturday Review of Literature

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OFF STAGE AND ON *By Brooks Atkinson*

IN THIS ISSUE

CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT
Reviews "Garland of Bays" by Gwyn Jones

KATHARINE SIMONDS
Reviews "Wolf among Wolves" by Hans Fallada

WALLACE NOTESTEIN
Reviews "Letters from Benjamin Disraeli"

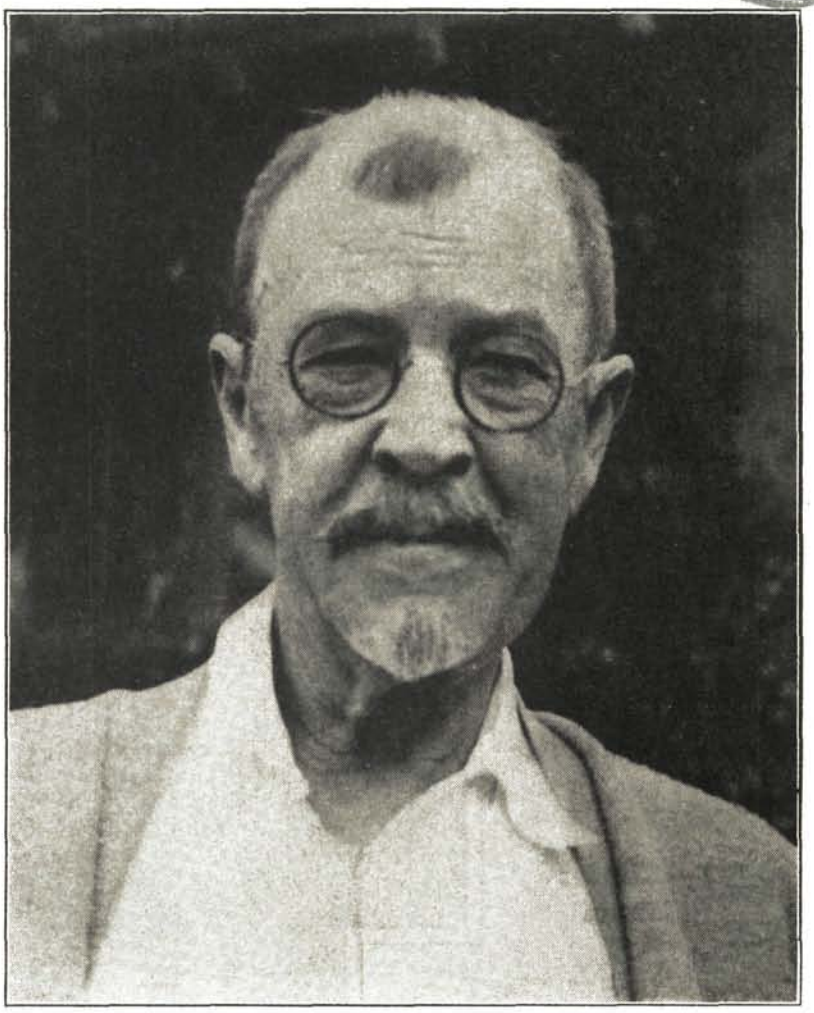
ROBERT STRUNSKY
Reviews "Life Class" by Ludwig Bemelmans

GEOFFREY PARSONS
Reviews "Elihu Root" by Philip C. Jessup

IRVING KOLODIN
Reviews "The Paderewski Memoirs" by Paderewski and Mary Lawton

IRWIN EDMAN
The British Read Halsey

Other Reviews by HOLMES ALEXANDER, W. L. WHITE, MARGARET WALLACE, JAMES GRAY, LOUIS J. HALLE, JR.



LINCOLN STEFFENS

"Such a man as Steffens was never made for certainties"
. . . *(See page 8)*

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The Macmillan Company, New York

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Off Stage and On

BY BROOKS ATKINSON

Keystone

First night in a theater lobby

WHEN the curtain starts to fall the morning newspaper reviewers leap into the aisle and hurry to the exit, hoping to get out of the theater before the departing audience clogs the passageways. It is eleven o'clock or eleven-fifteen and already most of tomorrow's newspaper is in type and in the make-up chases. Broadway is wriggling with humanity at that time of night; it is full of night-crawling daydreamers, and a sore impediment to a man who is in a hurry. But Forty-third Street is as open as a country lane, and a good place for brisk walking for a man who has a story on his mind.

At that hour the *Times* office is light and hospitable; my little coop on the outermost beach is a soothing haven. First, put the program on the desk so that the title of the play and the names of the actors can be accurately copied. Then lay out a box of matches, light a pipe, take a pad of yellow paper and a dozen sharply-pointed pencils from a drawer that has not been cleaned for a decade, and by that time a gentlemanly copy boy is at the door for the headline. It will measure one column or two according to the virtue of the drama tonight. Now, let's get down to serious work. What will the first line be? That is the crucial factor in the whole night's work. It is the entrance into the story; if the beginning is clumsy no steadying on this side or that can give the review an orderly appearance in the paper the next morning. Any reviewer worth his salt in the professional world would concentrate on the first line during the dash back to the office, instead of idly gossiping with Mantle of the *News* or Watts of the *Herald Tribune*, who are pretty genial fellows. But if the first line pops out of the fuliginous silence when it is needed, and by some miracle makes a perfect departure into the story, the rest of the review falls into place with the most astonishing willingness. Praise God from whom first sentences flow!

Take, say, fifteen minutes for the first paragraph, which is the whole review in miniature. The obliging copy boy takes it out to the copy desk, where mistrustful copyreaders hastily examine it for accuracy, grammatical coherence, good taste, force, elegance, and indecency, consulting the night editor on any ribaldry that may be too impudent for a respectable newspaper. (Once Falstaff's "belly" was changed to Falstaff's "stomach," until I heard about it; and there was a time when every "prostitute" had to be a "wanton" which, so far as I understand love, is quite a different thing.) After the first paragraph has been disinfected the man at the copy-control desk takes a disinterested glance at the length and sends it up to the composing room on the automatic carrier. By that time the second paragraph is written, and unless the copy boy is practising his Yogi exercises he transmits it to copy-desk headquarters and the same procedure continues until the review is finished.

Meanwhile, the composing room, which is a chamber of magic, has been tapping away at the Broadway bulletins. Columns of crisis and scandal have been bearing down on that patient room for hours; stock market tables have been testing a compositor's dexterity; from Washington the President has been scaring the living daylights out of business, labor unions, and the middle class, and enough stuff to fill a set of books has been rolled up in type since late afternoon. But somewhere in that huge jungle of linotype machines the copy-cutter finds a place where a little item of Broadway news can be set up swiftly and more accurately than the handwriting deserves. By the time the last paragraph is going up on the automatic carrier, the first paragraphs of the proof have been brought down the winding staircase by one of the proof boys. Unless things go hopelessly wrong, as they do upon occasion, that is the routine of reviewing a play for a morning newspaper.

To many people the review is infernally important—or at any rate, they think so. Although it will be on the street soon after two o'clock, some of them cannot bear to wait that long. There is a leak in our office; the head of the department is the victim of a conspiracy. Tecumseh, the drama reporter, who really ought to be home with his family at midnight, can be cajoled by neurotic friends of his into reading the proof of a review over the telephone. Before the last paragraph is written, Tecumseh can sometimes be overheard as he coldly reads the first paragraph over the telephone; it sounds monstrously flat and stupid on such occasions. Leslie Howard got the news of his "Hamlet" that way. According to Tecumseh, who stammered and blushed as he plowed through my animadversions, Mr. Howard took it like a gentleman, although he raised hell about it when he recovered his strength a day or two later and trounced the critics to delighted audiences after every good performance.

If there were no commercial significance to newspaper reviews, drama criticism would be an idyllic profession of theater-going and scribbling on yellow pads. But all forms of show business feed out of the soupy trough of publicity, depending upon the newspapers for their promotion. In

Next Week

THE EDUCATION OF AN AMERICAN
By MARK SULLIVAN
Reviewed by William Allen White

TALES OF A WAYWARD INN
By FRANK CASE
Reviewed by Robert Nathan

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New York, the newspapers take a remarkable interest in the theater; in addition to the daily news notes and the reviews, they treat the theater to imposing week-end sections in which drawings, photographs, columns of comment, news, and personal sketches keep the reader in intimate contact with the wizardry and duplicity of the theater world. As everyone associated with a drama department knows, the sections are closely and widely read in New York City and all through the country, for thousands of people are fascinated by the theater and regularly attend it. There is also an enormous public that reads about and discusses the theater without ever setting foot inside a playhouse. Particularly in recent years, the interest the theater has taken in the vast social problems of the day has given it a cultural influence greater than the size of the actual theatergoing public. Although most of the letters from readers come from New York and vicinity, many of the most interesting and best informed come from distant parts of the country, where theatrical fare is meager. The large week-end drama sections are thus maintained in response to general public interest; they also help to round out the service a daily newspaper provides. And the theater could scarcely get on without them; they not only inform the theatergoing public, but they also widen it. The result is that a lot of show business is conducted in the columns of the daily newspapers, which are the chief source of trade information.

To go back to the daily review which we dropped two paragraphs earlier, it is the first public response to the play that has just opened, and as such it is thought to have great commercial importance. The importance is a good deal less than giddy theater people enjoy believing; and it is not an arbitrary imposition of a critic's will on the public, but a news and editorial report of last night's theater event. But business at the box office is immediately influenced by the tenor of the next day's reviews. If they are all exuberant, possibly there will be a line at the box office by noon, for the public response to popular shows is immediate. The fate of the play is now in the hands of the public, which, in most cases, confirms the opinion of a unanimous press, although such epochal successes as "Abie's Irish Rose" and "Tobacco Road" grew in the face of unfavorable verdicts in nearly every newspaper in town. But even a unanimously favorable press cannot drive the public to a play which by some strange instinct it decides it does not want to see. It would not go to Philip Barry's "White Wings," although critics, columnists, and other writers raised the most urgent sort of din in its behalf.

If the notices of last night's play are "mixed," that is, if some are friendly and some are obdurate, the immediate box-office fortunes of the play are likely to be uncertain; and this is the occasion when a producer's personal interest in his play and business resourcefulness are put to a test. Some years ago Crosby Gaige saved "Accent on Youth" by industriously promoting it after a tepid opening. "The Women," which has been a great box-office success, opened to mixed notices and looked like a failure for three weeks until the public discovered that poison and scandal were just what it wanted. When the notices are particularly bad, most producers close without further exploitation. The little pieces of dreadfulness that are constantly turning up to confound everyone who sees them seldom defy failure for more than a few days; some of them never give more than one disastrous performance. Although Tallulah Bankhead's "Antony and Cleopatra" cost $125,000 before it came into New York it gave only four performances after uncommonly bad notices in the press. Rowland Stebbins, the producer, knew that the notices had told the truth about one of the worst bungled Shakespearean revivals New York had ever seen.

Although a good many talented and, in rare cases, high-minded people have devoted months to the production of a play, the reviews that dispose of it are written within a space of twelve hours. On the surface, that seems diabolically unfair, and it looks as though unprecedented power has been put in the hands of what is sometimes referred to as "a little body of willful men." Elmer Rice has said so more than once with the wild fury of which only he is capable; he blames the critics for the failure of his personal enterprises at the Belasco Theater a few years ago.

But the notion that the critics willfully make or break a play is subject to further consideration. In the first place, the critic is on the side of the public. Although he owes the theater an informed, tolerant, and selfless consideration, and must serve as its spokesman with personal generosity, he is on the public's side. Unofficially, he represents the public; his basic point of view is that of a theatergoer. His ultimate decisions are made from the audience point of view. If, in most cases, a theatergoer knows whether or not he likes a play as soon as the final curtain descends, it is reasonable to suppose that a reviewer can decide with equal rapidity. Criticism of the time element in reviewing is a stalking-horse. We are talking now about ordinary plays. Some of the others, like those of Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Sean O'Casey, and most of the classics, require the most studious thought a reviewer is capable of giving them. Fortunately, he has a week-end opportunity to read the script and sift his impressions before he need offer his conclusions as final. But most plays would not bear another day's consideration, and ought to be reviewed immediately while the impressions are fresh.

In the second place, the basic element in a theater review is not the whim of a reviewer, but the play he is reporting and discussing. The frequent attacks upon drama criticism usually overlook the primary fact that plays are not all of one quality. Some are good and some are bad, and it is the business of the critic to say so clearly. Blaming the critics for writing unfavorable notices is a frivolous way of putting the cart before the horse. No one would be silly enough to maintain that the successful plays in the theater are the result of the critics' genius and clairvoyance. The credit for good plays belongs to the author, director, actors, and producers who have created them. It is equally silly to blame the critics for the failures; the author, directors, actors, and producer are responsible for them. In the ideal sense, good plays engender good notices; bad plays breed bad reviews. For the function of the critic is that of an experienced theatergoer who

(*Continued on page* 14)

Desert Lake

BY FREDERICK MORTIMER CLAPP

ASPENS, aflame with a yellow unconsuming
fire, lick up slopes where jade-green junipers
cling, contorted, to red cliffs.
The bitter opaline lake, gripped in its scorched rock-crystal shores,
drifts mistless, like a stretched and sheeny silk, to the clear horizon.
The dun-colored lonely hills, a-crumple with gullies,
sleep into their lifeless eternity.

Ah, you who have so desired a clear-cut vision,
you with your ant-like problems of co-operation,
and stung with love when the mating season
pushes ajar the iron door of the future,
look, as your brief bright day folds up beyond the ranges,
at this flawless and sterile unity,
this never-to-be-awakened
faceted diamond of peace.

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Puritan of the Fleshpots

GARLAND OF BAYS. By Gwyn Jones. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

THE unheroic hero of this spirited period novel is Robert Greene, the dramatist who created "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" and who, in a bitterly choleric pamphlet, dubbed his rival Shakespeare an "upstart crow." Few Elizabethans surpassed him in versatility. His earliest works were romances built on the Lylyan model, but from these he turned to the imitation of Marlovian tragedy. He essayed, with more success, both comedy and the chronicle play, and at last found his best medium in a kind of narrative tract, the so-called "Conny-catching Pamphlets" depicting low-life in London.

"Few surpassed him in versatility" . . . (From the jacket of "Garland of Bays.")

As the central figure in a rapid, richly varied, authentically realistic historical novel, he is as if made to order. The outlines of his career, in so far at they may be drawn from exterior sources, are actually extremely shadowy, but such vagueness gives to the novelist all the more liberty to do as he pleases with questionable events. Autobiographical passages abound in the romances and the pamphlets. If they are inconsistent, it matters little to the inventive but scholarly chronicler who can choose what best suits his own pattern, and can build up out of the fragments a history which is as artistically true as ingenuity, industry, and a wide knowledge of Elizabethan life and letters can make it. It is just such a complete re-creation that Mr. Jones has here provided, and he is brilliantly successful.

Greene, as Mr. Jones sees him, is a most subtly fascinating personality. Puritan-bred, he cannot escape from the worship of morality. Drunk, disorderly, brothel-mad, constantly on the make, he is physically incapable of decent conduct, but he never forgets what decency ought to be. It would be easy to dismiss him as the typical hypocrite, but this Mr. Jones carefully does not do. And he is persuasively right. Greene was the inconsistent product of his inconsistent times, the scholar and poet who succumbed to the fleshpots but who still belonged, spiritually, to the puritan brotherhood.

Color and History

THREE HARBOURS. By F. VAN WYCK MASON. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by HOLMES ALEXANDER

IN his twentieth published book Mr. Mason turns from detective fiction and blood-and-thunder thrillers to the historical novel. The result is a tumultuous tale, its characters more lively perhaps than life-like, its action jumbled, its writing exclamatory; but the composite product is something lusty and engaging.

The three harbors are Norfolk, Boston, and Mangrove Bay, Bermuda, in the years 1774-75. Rob Ashton, a young Virginia shipping merchant, is struggling along with a coastwise trade, hampered alike by zealous revolutionists and British hijackers. Ashton wants nothing so much as to be left alone, but fortuitous gales of plot and historical happenchance load his ships with contraband, smallpox, mutineers, runaway slaves, and fetching females. There are dozens of minor characters and interlocking plots, but scarcely a dull moment from cover to cover. It has been said that Mr. Mason's characters are none too convincing, but only a hard-hearted reader will have the breath to complain. Aside from the early chapters, where too much space is given to political explanation, the novel has pace enough to compensate for its other shortcomings. One needs not be prudish to get fed up with the author's fondness for four-letter "realism." This tendency, along with the tendency to exaggeration in style and incident, are the book's chief faults. Nevertheless there are sections where the writing hits high above mere fast-action narrative.

In his preface the author lays the usual claim to the authenticity which is now demanded of historical fiction. The chapter headings are dates, the text of the book carries documentary evidence to prove its validity. It is easy to see that author and publishers are courting comparison with the best of the current historical novels. Such comparison is unfavorable to Mr. Mason, and unnecessary. He is not in the class with Walter Edmonds, Esther Forbes, or Kenneth Roberts. Mr. Mason has written what used to be called a "costume novel," wherein the ingredients are mainly excitement and color. As such "Three Harbours" is topnotch.

Hans Fallada—drawing by K. S. Woerner

Nightmare of 1923

WOLF AMONG WOLVES. By Hans Fallada. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by KATHARINE SIMONDS

GERMANY in 1923 is the scene of Mr. Fallada's new book — that nightmare Germany of the Ruhr days, which one must remember if one is to understand the Germany of today. When people's savings suddenly would not buy more than a few postage stamps, and the mark still lost value every day, every other standard became equally uncertain.

Mr. Fallada shows some of the reassuring fantasies which the desperate millions developed to escape from the still more fantastic reality in which they found themselves. Into what is essentially a simple story of a young man finding himself, he has woven numerous other plots, large and small. Gamblers in Berlin, peasants on the Polish border, illegal troops trying to organize a putsch, prisoners, the bourgeoisie who are not quite ruined yet—he makes us share all these lives. And besides the larger figures, there are numberless other characters, who appear only incidentally, yet whose faces remain with us when we have finished the book, faces on which their hopes and their sentences are written.

Wolf, the hero, is an amiable and rather weak young man when the book begins. Knowing nothing but a world at war, he can think of no better way to earn his living than by gambling his small capital. Had he remained useless much longer, he would have been spoilt; it is the making of him therefore when accident lands him with the job of managing an absurdly ill-run estate. After the unbelievable horror of Berlin, the countryside seems to him orderly and peaceful, even when the only labor to be obtained is prison labor; when there are rumors on every hand of a

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putsch, when mysterious unofficial soldiery roam the forest, and when the peasants are openly stealing the crops. Here at least is a job to be done, responsibility to be taken. Wolf grows up; moreover, his new strength makes him a kind of rallying point around which slowly assemble many wavering elements. For though most people are somewhat corrupted in times like these, most also have instincts for order and a longing for someone to admire, which can be called upon.

Mr. Fallada writes always with extreme and cunning simplicity. He shows you his characters complete, in weakness as well as in courage; no one is completely unblemished except the heroine, another of those almost unbearably touching little girls whom he draws so well. For all its seven-hundred odd pages, the book rushes headlong with the irresistible impetus of a world in dissolution, to the final and incredible miracle of the stabilized mark.

The "Tory Democrat"

LETTERS FROM BENJAMIN DISRAELI TO FRANCES ANNE MARCHIONESS OF LONDONDERRY 1837-1861. *Edited with an Introduction by the Marchioness of Londonderry. New York: The Macmillan Co.* 1938. $3.25.

Reviewed by WALLACE NOTESTEIN

THIS is a useful addition to the body of literature about Disraeli. His letters have been intelligently edited by the present Marchioness of Londonderry, whose father, Henry (Viscount) Chaplin, was a supporter and friend of Disraeli. Extracts from some of the letters have already been published in Monypenny and Buckle, but there are in this volume about fifty letters that have not been in print before. They were written to Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry. She was a famous hostess. It is a nice touch of the early nineteenth century that she was said, when seated in her grandeur, to have been so terrifying to guests that on one occasion they turned about and went back the way they came "rather than pass through the perilous straits." But she was an intelligent woman withal and must be given the credit for having taken up Disraeli earlier than most of the great ladies.

The Disraeli we get in these letters is not yet tired and old, though in the last letters he is beginning to feel his years. He is playing the "great game" of politics, using all the social trumps he could draw. His connections mean everything to him, but he is not neglectful of party work. Sometimes he resents the situation that he has to do the thinking and organizing for his party. "I have never yet," he writes, "been fairly backed." "I have stormed the Treasury Benches; twice fruitlessly, and the third time with a tin kettle to my tail." The editor remarks that he appeared at times "almost an onlooker, a critic of himself or a performer in a pageant rehearsing his part."

His confidential letters to this "dearest lady" do not show his greatness. Politics take up much of their space, mostly the ups and downs of politics. There are few wide views or attempts to see the English or European situation in perspective. When he does try to do that, he is not impressive. "Once destroy," he wrote, "the English aristocracy and enthrone the commercial principle as omnipotent in this island, and there will be no repelling force which will prevent the Sclavonians conquering the whole of the South of Europe." France he believed to be quite exhausted (1849). "No republic can restore it, for there is no plunder left to support a Republic—and plunder was the inspiration of the great movement of the last century [the Revolution]."

There are few or no ideals in the letters. That Tory democracy which he put upon his banner does not appear; perhaps he assumed that his correspondent would not be interested. He knew how to interest her; he gossiped of marriages and expected births, he related scandals, gaming episodes, financial reverses, and inheritances gained. He told her of conversations with dukes and diplomats and royalty. There is nothing drearier than society gossip of long ago.

Yet the letters are sprightly and amusing. Indeed they are cheering. They make us suspect that with all the ills of our time we may be living in a more real and natural world.

Wallace Notestein is professor of history at Yale University and an authority on English parliamentary annals.

Personal History of a Pioneer

MARGARET SANGER. An Autobiography. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1938. $3.50.

Reviewed by MARGARET WALLACE

TWENTY years ago you could not pick up a magazine without finding a photograph of Margaret Sanger—a disarmingly gentle-looking woman, flanked by two sturdy sons—over an advertisement for "Woman and the New Race." This book contained no contraceptive information, but women who imagined it might purchased it eagerly to the tune of 250,000 copies. Mrs. Sanger in her own country was a prophet, unhonored at the moment perhaps, but certainly much discussed. Her magazine had been suppressed. She had been prosecuted for sending obscene matter through the mails, for opening a birth control clinic. Her meetings had been closed by the police, and she had served a sentence in Queens County Penitentiary.

Margaret Sanger

Even readers old enough to remember the newspaper stories will be surprised to learn from Margaret Sanger's autobiography exactly how large was her share in this humanitarian crusade. Not that it seems an egotistic record. On the contrary, it would be hard to find a personal history set down more simply or with better grace. In the main it is a story of action, direct, forceful, and plain-spoken, this account of the little Irish-American nurse from upstate New York, who believed that the best way to change a bad law was to go on breaking it. When Margaret Sanger decided, in 1913, that birth control was the only answer to the problem of poverty and misery in New York's lower East Side, she was faced with a blank wall of ignorance and prejudice. A year of research in the best libraries of America proved fruitless. Even the medical profession, which refused officially to meddle with the question, had access to nothing in the way of reliable and tested birth control information. Mrs. Sanger's personal investigations in France and the Netherlands, and later in Germany, provided not only the theoretical arguments for her campaign, but the practical means for putting it into application.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this autobiography as a contribution to the history of ideas in our own time. Twenty-five years of social change are described with relentless clarity—and most of us have forgotten already how vast that change was, and how painfully it was brought about. Also it makes excellent reading. There are a few trivial mistakes, inevitable in a book written largely from memory. On the whole it is a moving story, and in spite of its gravity the author's Irish wit flashes out frequently. Heywood Broun was wrong when he said she had no sense of humor.

In any case, Margaret Sanger herself made the perfect reply to that charge. "I am the protagonist," she said, "of women who have nothing to laugh at."

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Personality of a Hotel

LIFE CLASS. By Ludwig Bemelmans. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT STRUNSKY

ARNOLD BENNETT once put a hotel under a microscope, observed its cellular organism, its circulatory system, its basal metabolism, and compiled from his notes a definitive treatise of 700 pages. Bennett was on the outside looking in. Bemelmans was on the inside looking out, and in "Life Class" he has recorded the personality of a great hotel.

He started out as an apprentice for a Bavarian uncle who owned a string of hotels in the Austrian Tyrol. When young Bemelmans failed to show the proper interest and responsibility, his uncle suggested that he emigrate to the United States. He supplied him with several letters of introduction and the boy, barely emerging from adolescence, arrived in New York to start out anew. He got a job almost immediately.

The management of the Astor lost a busboy when Bemelmans was repeatedly caught absorbed in the music of the hotel orchestra instead of in the pursuit of his duties. They gave him the gate. He fished another of his uncle's letters from his trunk and again was quickly hired by another equally famous hotel. He started out again as a busboy, and rose rapidly to the position of assistant manager of the banquet department. On his days off he studied painting. On his days on, he observed the flow of life as revealed by the persons of hotel guests, fellow employees, headwaiters who wanted to be prizefighters, chefs whose temperament exceeded that of coloratura sopranos.

He observed acutely the emotional gymnastics that accompanied the organization of a $50,000 debutante party, or the operation of a large Jewish wedding party.

Brassaï, Paris

Ludwig Bemelmans "has seen all the tricks and tragedies that take place behind stairs of a great hotel." . . .

Bemelmans has seen all the tricks and tragedies that take place behind stairs of a great hotel. He has assembled them with great understanding in this slight autobiography. It is an affectionate, discerning story, broken in continuity only by the author's enlistment in the army, of which he has already written successfully in "My War with the United States." Bemelmans is both a wise and witty man, an artist who is in increasing demand by magazines, an executive who operates one of the most picturesque restaurants in the city.

A Cog in the Business Cycle

THE KENTS. By LeGrand Cannon, Jr. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by W. L. WHITE

MR. CANNON'S novel is a poignant study in the futility of a little cog in American business. Its importance lies in its careful balance and delicacy rather than in its impact. If it never sweeps the reader off his feet, his interest never wavers.

The novel opens with the Civil War speculative boom, in atmosphere indistinguishable from that of the late twenties except for its mutton-chop whiskers and a few other stage props. The three brothers of the quietly middle-class Kent family are engulfed in it and presently ruined.

There is a gap of a decade, and then the novel's real story opens on page 103 as little Jimmie Kent, son of the youngest and most appealing Kent brother who died during the panic, arrives in a New England mill town to go to work in a hardware factory. We watch little Jimmie groping to find himself in the anonymous monotony of the factory's twelve-hour-per-day grind, and presently a tender adolescent love story begins to develop. Nothing much happens except that presently the lovers marry, and yet with that little Mr. Cannon succeeded in inflaming my emotions by the indirection of his skilled narrative style.

Then Jimmie's young wife watches his personality shrivel. He has given his life to the business and his boss, who presently turns out to be, not even the grumpy little black beetle who founded it, but the bankers who buy it to incorporate it when the black beetle decides to retire.

The two leading characters, Jimmie and his wife, are tremendously alive. So are most of the minor ones; there is a dry little Yankee conductor of a branch line train who appears on one page and is worth the price of the book. But some of the secondary characters fail to come off. Mr. Cannon's women—Jimmie's mother, sister, and wife, are a little too satisfactory. They are everybody's dream-girls.

W. L. White is the author of "What People Said."

Great Actress

TO REMEMBER AT MIDNIGHT. By Michael Foster. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by JAMES GRAY

IT is a pity that no one seems able to write about a "great actress" without appearing to be merely infatuated and stage-struck. Even Henry James, who loved the theater and whose genius for examining the delicate complexities of temperament should have made him at home in its atmosphere, did not in "The Tragic Muse" achieve a very memorable picture of the world peopled by players. If the author of "American Dream" in his new novel, "To Remember at Midnight," has failed similarly to be persuasive, at least he has gone down in gallant company.

Mr. Foster knows a great deal about the theater. He is well acquainted with its technical language. He has been shocked by the way in which its incompetent poseurs are permitted to exploit genuine talent. He has been touched, amused, annoyed by its fabulous figures. But somehow none of that knowledge is able to inform his story of the rise of Ann Parnet. From the moment when her career begins as member of a small-time unit playing vaudeville in the little lost towns of the High Sierras, Ann is predestined for enormous success. The author, too reverent in his attitude toward his character, requires the reader to take on faith the mystery of her greatness. It is never explicitly defined.

The stages of Ann's progress are sketched realistically. We see her slamming in disgust the door of the dramatic school to which a benefactor has sent her; getting her first chance through the intervention of an assistant stage manager whom she had known in the kerosene circuit days; playing small roles under sympathetic stars and larger ones written for her by understanding playwrights. The pattern is there; but the important thing is left out. What was the special quality which made audiences forget to cough when Ann appeared? We are never made to understand or believe.

Curious corners of the American scene are Mr. Foster's province. He has employed several backgrounds besides that of the theater in "To Remember at Midnight" and peopled them with bold, bawdy eccentrics. But all of them seem to have been created with the aid of grease-paint.

What Mr. Foster seems to say is that success in the theater goes to competent hacks who catch at it more or less by accident. Unfortunately that was not his intention. He has offered merely an escorted tour of the playhouses, conducted in the lush oratorical style of the tough-tender school of letters.

James Gray is literary and dramatic editor of the St. Paul Dispatch.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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Paradox of a Muckraker

LINCOLN STEFFENS was already an old man the only time the writer of this editorial ever saw him. It was in his room in the Hotel Commodore, and he had come East to find a ghost for E. A. Filene, the "good" bad capitalist or the "bad" good capitalist, whichever way you wanted to have it. The ghost-hunter looked tired to death, but the moment he smiled he seemed utterly transformed. The sense of lightness and youth, of an almost glandular mental resilience, grew on me as he began reeling off the names of the young with a command of the situation that would have done credit to the most adventurous publisher's scout in New York. This Matty Josephson, now; he was a coming biographer, wasn't he? And Bob Cantwell; wasn't his fiction something fresh and new in a stale old world? Steffens wanted someone from the Left who could see the parable in the life of Filene, the "successful" failure or unsuccessful "success." The good bold bad man from Boston—or the bad bold good man—had proved to his fellow capitalists that they could make their system work if they tried. He had also proved presumably that they didn't want to try. The moral was paradoxical, pointing one way to Marx, the other way to J. A. Hobson, the English critic of the capitalist propensity to "over-save." Steffens enjoyed the two-edgedness of Filene's life; it tickled this Socrates from California who delighted in asking "insincere" questions to provoke sincere answers. Writing about Filene would presumably give a young author the opportunity to hit a little off-center, to blur the edges, to corrode the old platitudes. He took a vicarious pleasure in anticipating the work of the ghost.

Such a man as Steffens was never made for certainties. And the tragedy of his life, intellectually speaking, was that he closed his mind in his last years and closed it hard; as the two volumes of his letters* make plain, he became convinced that he had discovered a "science" of politics in the dogmas of Moscow. Post-war Europe had "proved" that "democracy can't be achieved by democratic methods." Like others who had grown up in the Coolidge years, when nothing seemed important except Babe Ruth, an occasional trip to Europe, the topic of prohibition, and the prose of Ernest Hemingway, I was greatly taken by the paradox. But today, in this post-Munich world, it seems nothing more than a blunder. And this editorial, for what it is worth, is at once a tribute, a lament, and a confession.

During 1930 and 1931 I had mucked about in the New York Public Library, reading old volumes of *McClure's* and trying to discover the kind of country I had been born into. The pre-war years made no real pattern: there was seemingly a strange, fluctuating discontinuity at work in American history. The autobiographies of Brand Whitlock ("Forty Years of It") and Fred Howe ("Confessions of a Reformer") stopped short of any revelation. But the blindness was in me: I was mistaking an oscillation for a long ground swell. And then came Steffens's "Autobiography," a great, luminous book that put pre-war and post-war years into a long perspective. By relating the United States to what had happened in Europe and Asia, the pre-war years took on meaning: they represented the growing pains of a nation in which the balance of power was finally passing into the hands of great institutions—with an incalculable effect on our simple idea that democracy is what you have when you have finished counting noses.

The lesson of Steffens was nothing very profound; but he was the first to make it seem important to people of the immediate post-war generation. And the crux of his analysis was the "boss." Again and again in his autobiography Steffens pictured the political boss as the "representative of privilege," one whose job was to betray the common people into the hands of the "interests." The same refrain runs through Steffens's letters, which are at once frank and cryptic. And, of course, Steffens is almost right: the boss does do a job for the "interests." But, some time later, when I was given carte blanche to muckrake a city for two months, the picture of the boss as Judas-betraying-the-common-people dissolved away. The boss might be ugly in many of his tactics, and he might be a two-timer by standards which demand that a man stand foursquare for ideals, but he represented not so much a force in himself as a focal point. He was, in short, a broker, one who volunteered (for considerations of prestige or "honest" graft) to balance the claims of conflicting groups and of embattled classes. Whether you looked at Chicago or Podunk, the result was the same: the boss was a specialist in estimating pressures and in "weighting" their importance by judging where money, propaganda, and custom took precedence over simple votes. When the job of assessing the relative claims of various groups was done, the broker offered his compromise. If the offer was shrewd, the broker kept his job; if not, he went out in a landslide.

Steffens, one gathered, was against this; he wanted his "bosses" to be straight-out class representatives. But he also wanted "democracy." The whole business becomes a little confusing at this point. How, one might ask, can you have political democracy if you or your group or your class lacks a mechanism through which to register your pressure? If you have demands to make that conflict with other peoples' demands there are only two courses open to you: either you go to open war against the opposing group or you call in a broker, a professional compromiser, to fix things up on a bird-in-hand basis. Steffens really knew this as well as anyone, but he chose to fight for a world in which there would be only one group, one class, one "line"—a communist world in which eternal unanimity would dispense with the need for broker-politicians. Maybe such a world might prove satisfactory to a generation conditioned to it. But why, in any case, did Steffens go on talking about "democracy"? Was he still hitting off-center, still talking in parables? Or was he confused about his values?

To judge from his later letters (those to Robert Cantwell or Anna Louise Strong, for example) Steffens finally ceased to speak the language of the crypto-moralist. But when his words became plain, his values became mixed. He wanted a world in which the sense of security and plenty would make for social ease and outspoken, free men and women. But he failed to ask one pertinent question: how under the sun can you have a world of freedom if human beings are denied the right to employ a broker when their desires conflict with the desires of others? To make the proposition simple, let us narrow the issue to man-as-voter. A democratic order presupposes the right of the individual to choose his representatives. But the right means nothing, concretely, if the individual can be coerced in his choice. After a life of muckraking, of continual contact with big business men who brought *their* pressure to bear on the broker-boss, Steffens considered that democracy was menaced chiefly by the big corporation. This type of corporation could coerce its employees through threats of economic vengeance provided the alternative of self-support

* *THE LETTERS OF LINCOLN STEFFENS. Edited with Introductory Notes by Ella Winter and Granville Hicks. With a Memorandum by Carl Sandburg. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. 2 vols. $10.*

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were not easily available to those who refused to be intimidated. From this Steffens drew the corollary that the corporation must be replaced by the employer-State. But that is no way out, for the employer-State can coerce, too. By definition an employer-State can give or withhold access to the means and materials of production; it has a club. It is, therefore, incompatible with democracy of any kind.

The moral is obvious, even platitudinous: democracy is only possible in a society of various groups and classes, a society of many available alternatives. And it suggests this to me: that students of society should forget the political boss and concentrate on the pressure group behind the boss. The labor union, the coöperative, the institute, and the syndicate—these are the important things in a democracy. If their power is evenly spread, then society will be democratic. For democracy is what results when you have a state of tension in society that permits no one group to dare bid for total power. Steffens was always looking for and admiring the group that dared to strike for the total power. In the last analysis he was, thus, no democrat. I don't know whether he was right or wrong from the standpoint of history; maybe modern technology will compel the total victory of some one group or class as a prerequisite to keeping a sensitive economy working. But let's keep the record straight; let's not talk about "democracy" when we mean something entirely different. It's bad for our minds to blur our definitions, as Steffens, who liked "honest" crooks, was always ready to admit.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN.

Letters to the Editor

"The Restricted Shelf"

SIR:—Mrs. Margaret Culkin Banning's article, "The Restricted Shelf; Censorship's Last Stand," cannot but be of interest to liberal-minded public librarians. Since I have given much thought to this subject, have often spoken and written on it, I am particularly gratified to see in a literary review of wide general circulation, rather than in a professional library journal, this sound comment on a thorny subject of library administration by a distinguished library trustee—since Mrs. Banning is chairman of the board of the Duluth Public Library.

If I read Mrs. Banning's article correctly, she thinks we have reached the point where a public library may appropriately own practically any book that succeeds in getting issued by a reputable publisher; but that since public libraries in our democratic society are dependent for their support on public appropriations, their very lives may be in danger if they greatly offend public opinion; and so as a precautionary measure they are led to restrict certain books lest they fall into the hands of children or others for whom they might prove too strong meat. In other words, it is a pity that there must be any censorship, but that public opinion still makes this last remnant necessary. As with all compromises, this library censorship is full of inconsistencies and varies with communities and with the attitudes of library trustees and librarians. It is a commonplace among librarians that some books that yesterday were taboo are now required reading for high school pupils.

One important point not made by Mrs. Banning is that the books segregated in restricted shelves are often put there because otherwise they are stolen from our open shelf libraries. Apparently too many library readers of these restricted books, usually those in which sex bulks large, want not simply to borrow but to keep these books. Restricting is therefore a measure of library self-preservation.

It is good also to note that a library trustee who is also a prominent writer stresses the need of public libraries for more trained readers' advisers, for more branch libraries and for staffs sufficiently large so that they will not be engulfed in the mere mechanics of library work, but may come to know their readers, to meet them in a leisurely way, and thus be able to give them good counsel in their reading.

GEORGE F. BOWERMAN.
The Public Library,
Washington, D. C.

Minority Report

SIR:—May I please enter a protest against the gushing, undiscriminating praise of "With Malice toward Some"? Truly, it is often witty, and the author has a knack of unexpectedly combining words so that they tickle pleasantly the ear and the understanding. But she has a small and vulgar schoolboy's love for bathroom jokes, and no sense whatever of a guest's loyalty to his host. Of course English cooking is poor and the vegetables are limited and asking for milk gives a shock. (I've tried it, too.) But when a whole village has asked you to dinner and done its best for you, is it decent to harp for pages on its dull conversation? Which is better anyhow, polite dullness or smart-Alec freshness?

One more complaint. The English isn't very good. Precipitate instead of precipitous (or did she mean that to be funny?) and will instead of shall.

Then the pictures! How can anybody like any of them, always excepting the Princeton man by the ship's rail. *That* is first-class. The rest ugly, dull and poorly drawn.

M. S. PACKARD,
(Yankee for 315 Years)
Brooklyn, N. Y.

(For a sample of what British readers think of "With Malice toward Some," see page 13.*—Ed.)*

"To the Terrestrial Sphere"

SIR:—The poem for which your correspondent Professor Eliot inquired, in the issue of November 5th, is called "To the Terrestrial Sphere" and is to be found in the Bab Ballads by W. S. Gilbert.

BASIL DAVENPORT.
New York City.

(The editor wishes to thank Miss Carolyn Wells, Mr. Melville Cane, Mr. George Warren Arms, Mr. George P. Bissell, Mrs. William R. Hall, Dr. Alice Weld Tallant, Mr. Walter Ginsberg, Mr. John D. Hitchcock, Mr. Edmond W. Rickett, Mr. Ernest Lubin, and Mr. Bowditch Runnalls, who have also identified the quotation.)

"And just think, he wrote the whole works with one of them feathers."

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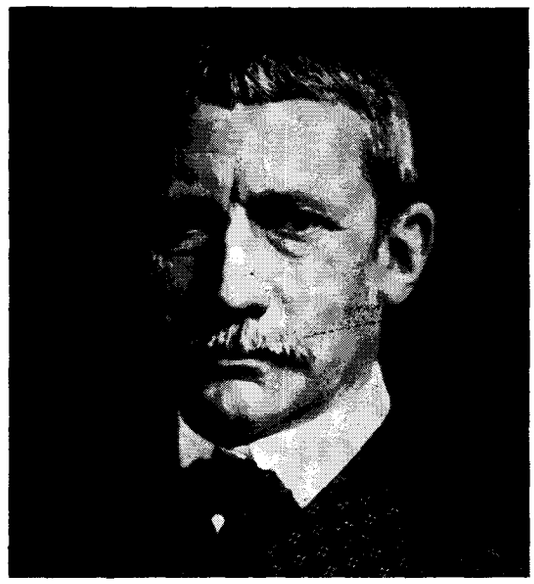
Loyalty Was His Demon*

BY GEOFFREY PARSONS



Elihu Root—"How could so much light be generated with so little heat?"

IT was the strange fate of Elihu Root to become a legend in his lifetime. In the long afternoon of his richly colored career—ending a year and three months ago, at the age of ninety-two—the leaves of disparagement dropped one by one to the ground. There remains the familiar tradition that here was the great American of his time, denied the Presidency by the stupidity of an electorate.

Now, already, arrives the material by which the legend can be tested. Part of the credit for the achievement of this monumental labor belongs to Mr. Root himself, who picked Professor Jessup, gave him the benefit of endless talks about moot topics, and never by word or hint sought to control the result. The author declares his affection and admiration in his preface; and his own conclusions are spread throughout the two volumes. Yet the evidence on both sides is invariably presented. Objectivity rules the record, if not always the formation of opinions. Quite properly, no historical judgment for the ages is attempted. Mr. Jessup has thus succeeded in performing the miracle of writing what is in effect an official biography with his historian's conscience unfettered and an utter loyalty to the facts.

How far does the legend survive the test of these documented volumes? An answer would be valuable. It could yield instruction as to the democratic process. It might bear heavily on the critical years of American history down to the present.

The reader of Mr. Jessup's biography will have little difficulty in reaching certain fundamental conclusions. One is the complete integrity of Mr. Root's character. He was a man who lived by the strictest code of professional ethics, personal and party loyalty, and a true devotion to his country. To write these words is to record almost the obvious; the long campaign by Mr. Hearst to smear Mr. Root's reputation ended years ago in futility.

In the same category can be placed the conception of Mr. Root as cold and unfeeling. Mr. Jessup demolishes this view by portraying first the extreme reticence that was the habit of the whole tribe of the Roots of Clinton, and second, the many occasions when Root displayed warmth of personal affection and the deepest emotions. Mr. Jessup employs a happy technique in building up these more intimate aspects of his subject, through personal episodes deftly dropped one by one, creating gradually the strongly individual figure that was Mr. Root. Typical of these episodes is the striking picture of Mr. Root at Buffalo following the death of President McKinley, when he spoke to his friends in "a voice choked with emotion and full of tears."

As for his ability of analysis and the power of his personality that made him a great master of the law and one of the ablest, perhaps the ablest public servant the country has ever had, they speak throughout the record. He was no universal genius. He never fitted into the Senate and his record there was not notable. But his service as Secretary of War, as Mr. Jessup makes clear, was a superb achievement, deserving all the praise that both Secretary Baker and Lord Haldane gave it. Here is beyond question the chief monument to the Root genius. The record of his service as Secretary of State, with its many and varied and uniformly solid decisions, holds perhaps only one comparable effort, his realization of the vital importance of South America to this country and the imaginative wisdom of his courtesy to these powers. No list of his skills would be complete without mention of the paternal restraint he was able to exercise upon Theodore Roosevelt, nearly fourteen years his junior. Since government is so often the creature of one man's whim, who can place a value on the frequent occasions, entertainingly described by Mr. Jessup, when Elihu bluntly told T. R. to his face how wrong he was!

The legend, however, goes beyond the abilities thus far mentioned. It raises at once the further question of Mr. Root's imagination and faith. His personal integrity was so complete that, as T. R. said, when his client was the United States, he was utterly loyal to that client, to the complete obliteration of earlier ties. But is loyalty, however complete, sufficient to make a great leader? Must not the fire of conviction be burning and the eye of the prophet command?

It would perhaps be asking too much of a young lawyer, aged twenty-six, to expect him to foresee how a retainer as counsel for an arrant political scoundrel would haunt his later career. Yet a reader of Mr. Jessup's accurate account of the Tweed trial can hardly fail to perceive significance in the episode. No one could have sprung from a home of finer thinking or nobler ideals than had this country youth, come to New York City to seek his fortune. While he was aiding in the defense of Tweed, his mother was writing him her doubts and fears of his course. The whole State was stirred to its core by the gallant effort to rescue the city of New York from a vicious political overlord. Yet this brilliant young son of high-minded parents felt no hesitation in accepting the retainer. Quite justly Mr. Jessup cites the code of the legal profession which not only authorizes a lawyer to defend the worst of criminals but in certain cases makes it his duty to do so. Young Root adhered strictly to that code in aiding the Tweed defense. Concededly there is no slightest professional blot upon his career. But it is overstating the rule to contend that he was under any obligation to take the Tweed case. An abundance of able counsel had been retained. A youngster of twenty-six could not possibly count greatly in the defense and was surely at liberty to refuse such an offer. Countless lawyers have always refused such clients, in criminal and civil cases alike.

It would be ridiculous to insist too strongly upon the Tweed retainer. At twenty-six anyone may blunder. Its only value is in the possibility that it was to be prophetic of an inborn quality, a certain rigidity of thought, an unimaginativeness, if you will, that habitually placed loyalty to a given code above every other consideration. As one reads on in Mr. Jessup's narrative, one discovers that the fire of loyalty always burned fiercely

* *ELIHU ROOT. By Philip C. Jessup. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1938. 2 vols. $7.50.*

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in Mr. Root's soul with respect to any client, good or bad, large or small, private or public. Here was a fine and admirable quality, and when the nation became his client, the nation was to benefit vastly thereby. But the question persists how and when the perfect lawyer qualified as the great leader.

Let us skip forty years and see how Mr. Root faced another critical moment. It was, indeed, the dramatic climax of his public service. Politically speaking, he was playing his most important role. Well on in his sixties, still as erect as a major, he undertook the task of ruling the wild sessions of the famous Republican convention of 1912.

Why was he there? What did he accomplish? Mr. Jessup's narrative of the convention is one of his best achievements, yet he might well have devoted more space to the problem of human motives involved and less to the technical defense of the Taft steam-roller. The real drama of the convention lay in the bitter, behind-the-scene struggle for individual delegates and the narrowness with which a band-wagon shift to Roosevelt in the convention was avoided. Two men saved the day for Taft. One was William Barnes, Jr., of Albany, who by sheer bulk and will-power fought the battle in the smoke-filled bedrooms. The other was Elihu Root, out in front, holding a wild convention in leash by the power of a mind.

Mr. Jessup gives what is apparently to him a satisfactory explanation of why Mr. Root undertook this crucial task of presiding over the Chicago Convention. Roosevelt was, to be sure, his great friend. "I care more for one button on Teddy's waistcoat, than for all Taft's body," he said afterward. He was under no compulsion to preside. Most of T. R.'s friends who split with him over the fantastic recall of judicial decisions remained in the background. Why did Mr. Root assume the responsibility of defeating his friend for the nomination? Mr. Jessup cites evidence to show that Mr. Root acted from a stern sense of duty to the Republican Party—an "almost religious and fanatical devotion to duty in the party cause." Doubtless his entirely sound repulsion toward the whole conception of judicial recall reinforced this sense of party obligation. As a prescient letter from Root to Roosevelt written in the winter of 1912 records, the former had no delusions as to what a bitter primary fight for the nomination would do. It would make the election of either Roosevelt or Taft impossible. Probably he did not then foresee the possibility that T. R., defeated for the nomination, would in his wrath bolt and attempt to organize a new party. But at Chicago he must have known well that he was fighting not to elect anyone but simply to hold the bare bones of the Republican party together. The lifeblood of the party, its potentiality for growth, its future, marched out with Roosevelt. In retrospect it seems plain that it would have been far better for the party to take its licking with the vagaries of T. R. than under the dead hand of the men who stood by Taft. Surely any leader with a great imagination would have sensed all this at Chicago. Yet there is no slightest hint in Mr. Jessup's pages that Mr. Root felt any qualms over what he was doing—or any regret thereafter.

"Fanaticism" hardly seems too strong a term for the party loyalty that made Root play his part at Chicago. What tragic irony in this farewell role! It was not as if Mr. Root had ever been a Republican reactionary of the Old Guard. Far from being an opponent of progress,

Elihu Root at tweny-five, the year before the Tweed trial.

he had accepted reform after reform. As his valuable labors for the World Court and entrance into the League later demonstrated, he had anything but a closed mind toward change. Yet as much as anyone else, he was responsible for killing progress in the Republican Party for a generation.

There must be long study of the material that Mr. Jessup has so ably assembled and organized before any final estimate of Mr. Root can be reached. But he was plainly too powerful and puzzling a character to be simplified into a legend forthwith. A demon of loyalty rode him always. That much seems clear. But why should this devotion—to the law, to a client, to the Republican Party—have retarded the development of a longer look, a larger philosophy, a more passionate conviction? How could so much light be generated with so little heat? Here is unmistakably one of those puzzles which make biography by far the best of reading. The novelist always gives, or purports to give, an answer. Mr. Jessup, excellent biographer that he is, leaves the problem to his readers to solve.

Geoffrey Parsons is chief editorial writer of the New York Herald Tribune, *and author of "The Stream of History."*

Two Decades of Lost Opportunities

TWENTY YEARS' ARMISTICE: 1918-1938. By William Orton. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

THE twentieth anniversary of the Armistice falls, by the grim irony of history, at the very moment when erstwhile victors and vanquished appear to have exchanged positions. Great Britain and France, with a score of allies, won the war; Germany, with one ally, has won the peace. Professor Orton, of Smith College, presents—on November 11, appropriately enough—a commentary upon this startling paradox, describing the economic and political disintegration of the past twenty years. His volume deserves a large public, not only because it is the first such study to appear after the Munich truce but also because it contains a sagacious and well-phrased interpretation of the post-war period. In addition to end maps drawn by the author, the three hundred pages of text are illustrated by several maps and are followed by footnote references and index. Professor Orton's survey, concentrating on central and eastern Europe, should prove useful for both the general reader and the college classroom, if supplemented by source material.

The tragedy of this twenty years' armistice, Professor Orton correctly observes, has been "the refusal of those who had the chance to do justice and to love mercy while there was yet time." During two decades of lost opportunities, the League of Nations remained merely the agency for perpetuating the Versailles arrangements; treaty revision was opposed by the beneficiaries, and collective security promoted as a means for the further repression of Germany. The principle of self-determination, applied only when useful to the Allies, led to the creation of new nation-states, each of which contributed toward the bankruptcy of Europe by the establishment of tariffs and defenses. The destruction of Austria and Czechoslovakia thus became inevitable, once Germany found it impossible to regain its prestige and power through collaboration with Britain and France.

The moral of this unhappy tale is the necessity of the "integration of Europe," for the peaceful coöperation envisaged in the League cannot appear until the folly of petty nationalisms is exorcised. "Twenty Years' Armistice" is, as a whole, an excellent brief introduction to the lack of justice and mercy during the past twenty years; one can only hope that 1958 will find more of these virtues in international affairs.

James Frederick Green is on the staff of the Foreign Policy Association.

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Paderewski's hands—from "The Paderewski Memoirs"

Memoirs for Four Hands

THE PADEREWSKI MEMOIRS. By Paderewski and Mary Lawton. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $3.75.

MY HUSBAND GABRILOWITSCH. By Clara Clemens. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1938. $4.

Reviewed by IRVING KOLODIN

TWO fine artists, contemporaries for most of their careers, are memorialized in these volumes. Curiously, the more subjective volume is not by the artist who writes of himself, but by the wife who writes of her departed husband. Paderewski's discussion of his own career is calm, probing, almost dispassionate. The Gabrilowitsch career, seen through the eyes of his wife, is restated lyrically and without stint of the most intimate correspondence and recollections.

Persons who expect to find a complete account of Paderewski's career to the present time in this volume will be disappointed, as the story carries only to the outbreak of the war. Their surprise will be particularly keen as the title gives an impression of completeness which is not sustained by the book; and there is no indication of years covered, on the spine or title page of the volume. Thus the whole period of Paderewski's activity in Polish statecraft, his experiences at Versailles, and his later return to concert-giving, are left for a later volume.

Nevertheless there is much in the substantial volume of nearly four hundred pages to interest the casual reader as well as the musical specialist. The variety of Paderewski's activities, artistic and political, are an indication of the sharp intelligence and diverse mentality he possessed; and these qualities make of his recollections a stimulating and individualized picture of the period in which he grew to manhood, infinitely more illuminating than the usual gossiping of musical celebrities.

Since the student days comprise almost half of the years covered by this part of Paderewski's memoirs, it is reasonable that a good part of the book is devoted to the early years in Warsaw, Berlin, and Vienna. There is a remarkable account of his training with Leschetizky, the great Viennese pedagogue, who could see little future for Paderewski as a performer because of his poor early training, but who did not hesitate to acknowledge the place he achieved through the most prodigious industry. From his early days in Berlin, when he met Rubinstein, Paderewski had the amazing presence and essential aristocracy of manner that commanded the attention of the great people of his time: and thereby we profit by his shrewd appraisals not only of such musicians as Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, von Bülow, and Theodore Thomas, but such other celebrities as Burne-Jones, Lloyd George, the Duke of Connaught, and Sarah Bernhardt. Miss Lawton has done extremely well in freshening Paderewski's memory at many points, and in preserving an air of informality and unpretentiousness through the whole book.

The contrast of this many-sided public life with the single-minded concentration of Gabrilowitsch is an arresting one. Here is the example, in excelsis, of the artist who lived wholly in and for music, whose life vibrated only to its chords and harmonies. In a sense, Mrs. Gabrilowitsch's most intimate recollections tell us little about the gentleness and sincerity of her late husband's character that he did not reveal to us himself in his performances. However, it is a pleasure to know of one artist whose private life was a faithful reflection of his public personality.

Purely as a literary accomplishment, the book has no distinguished merits, save in its concluding chapters, which give us the harrowing rise and fall of hope during his final illness as only could be told by one who lived—and died—through it. But there are some engaging recollections of the author's father, Mark Twain, and of persons who passed through the Gabrilowitsch household—particularly such musicians as Harold Bauer and Albert Spalding—and an especially interesting account of the creation of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"Entered as Second-Class Matter"

A HISTORY OF AMERICAN MAGAZINES: 1865-1885. *By Frank Luther Mott. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.* 1938. $5.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

THIS is the third volume in an admirable and useful series which will eventually extend to five—to embrace, probably, periodicals not yet born. Volume I, published by Appleton in 1930 and now reissued under the Harvard imprint, extended from the beginning (1741) to 1850, and Volume II, also published by the Harvard Press, from 1850 to 1865.

Mr. Mott is a superb packer. He tucks his facts in tightly and in good order, and out of them a dozen other sound books could readily be constructed. Here, for instance, is the most comprehensive data ever gathered on the prices paid for serial publication in America. A monograph on early magazine advertising could easily be assembled from text and notes. Yet Mr. Mott finds space for an occasional fairly lengthy anecdote, as witness the fake Smith College protest concerning the "morality" of a poem which the austere Richard Watson Gilder was to read at commencement, or the *Lakeside Monthly's* greeting to the first issue of Hale's *Old and New.*

A casual skimming brings out little odd lots of information of high interest to any surveyor of the periodical scene: Under Theodore Dreiser's editorship of *Delineator* no illustrator might depict a man smoking a cigarette or show a wineglass on a table; prior to 1929 *Harper's Bazaar* was *Harper's Bazar; Scribner's Monthly* (later *Century*) once advertised a cure for piles; America's leading undertakers' journal began as "a little miscellany of jokes and anecdotes"; the *American* paid ex-President Coolidge $15,000 for each of two articles totalling under eight thousand words (some $3.80 per word); Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were represented in a single issue of the *Chautauquan* in 1891; as early as the eighties the *National Police Gazette* was alluding to "dizzy blondes" and "rackets"; the *New York Weekly* in 1874 proclaimed its circulation of 350,000 to be "the largest in the world"; the *North American Review* confounded the publishing cosmos in 1868 by beginning to publish the names of authors; the national pastime found its first spokesman as early as 1867 in Henry Chadwick's *Ball Players' Chronicle;* the *Round Table* of the sixties had four subtitles during its brief career, whereof the second was "A Saturday Review of Literature, Society and Art."

One may look forward to the completion of Mr. Mott's monumental task with the highest anticipations.

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The British Read Halsey

BY IRWIN EDMAN

Mr. Edman, on holiday in England during the past summer, read aloud passages from Margaret Halsey's "With Malice toward Some" to his hosts in Devonshire, with the following results.

PERHAPS the many readers of "With Malice toward Some" wonder what the English will make of it. I have one guess, based on an advance experience in a Devonshire inn last summer.

The Englishman and his wife were the most genial possible stereotypes of London suburbia, and they had been, in the diffident, I-hope-you-do-not-mind-my-intrusion manner of English friendliness, extremely kind. He smoked a pipe and quoted Pickwick at length, and complained that no one wrote like that any more. She got books from the circulating library at Boots's the Chemist in a town fourteen miles away. But there were no more books with nice people in them. I seemed to know about books, they said; what did I recommend? I seemed to be laughing out loud at a book yesterday at tea-time; was it, Mr. Grigg asked, as good as Pickwick?

I gulped. I thought of Miss Halsey's comments on English food. She had not, I knew, stayed at this inn, but her diatribes fitted its cuisine. I thought of her report on Englishwomen's hats and shoes; she *must* have known Mrs. Grigg. I thought of her comments on English conversational technique, its expert emptiness: she might have been walking across the moors with Mr. and Mrs. Grigg and me yesterday. Dared I show them the book? I gulped again.

"It's a little book partly about England, about Devonshire, written by a young woman, a friend of mine. Her husband taught at Exeter for a year."

"How very interesting," beamed little Mrs. Grigg. "Fancy that! So close by, too."

"Did she like England?" asked Mr. Grigg.

"Ye-es," I said, "in a way she did, especially the landscape and the strawberry jam."

"Ra-ther!" said Mr. Grigg.

"May we read it?" asked Mrs. Grigg bashfully. "If you are through with it, I mean to say."

"Look here," said Mr. Grigg, "couldn't you read it to us after tea? That *would* be jolly. I say!"

I gulped again. "Why, yes," I said slowly. He detected some embarrassment.

"If it's not too much trouble to fetch it," he added.

"I have it right here," I said. "Let me find a good passage." I thumbed the book for a harmless-looking one.

> You learn after you have been in England three or four days that when a Briton says "it isn't English" there is nothing to do but pick up your hat and tiptoe quietly away.

The Griggs looked puzzled. "She writes very clearly," said Mr. Grigg. "But just what does she mean?"

I tried again. My eye lighted on:

> The English eschew the temptations of achievement and symmetry and lie quietly down to let the universe roll over them. It frees the juices, I am bound to admit, but it leaves the poor Britons considerably mashed.

"How very odd," said Mrs. Grigg.

> A London store's idea of a well-turned-out woman is something resembling a Biblical character in a charade.

"She is very original," said Mrs. Grigg. Mr. Grigg looked reflective, looked at his wife, and burst out laughing.

"Jolly good, that," he said. "She hits it off. Read some more."

Mrs. Grigg looked first puzzled, then aggrieved. "You said you liked *my* hats, John."

"Oh, I was thinking of everyone else's. Read some more." I read aloud Miss Halsey's miserere on the English cuisine.

> It is possible to eat English piecrust, whatever you may think at first. The English eat it, and when they stand up and walk away, they are hardly bent over at all.

Mr. Grigg guffawed. "Hardly bent over at all," he repeated. "Jolly good, that 'hardly'; she does know England and English food. She must be very clever. Read some more."

I read about the Bishop's wife at the garden party ("she knows *our* Bishop's wife, I'll wager," said Mr. Grigg); I read the account of the iceberg sociability at a London party.

"Poor dear," said Mrs. Grigg, "she must have been very unhappy here."

"How very amusing she must have found it," said Mr. Grigg. "And it reads just like Dickens."

"I must ask them to have it at Boots's," said Mrs. Grigg. "I am sure there must be nice people in it somewhere."

"Yes, there are," I said, "a lot of gentry. But you wouldn't like what she says about them."

"They're very jolly people," said Mr. Grigg. "Like Pickwick." And he borrowed the book, and while I read his Pickwick, he chuckled till dinner over my Halsey, once or twice laughing uproariously.

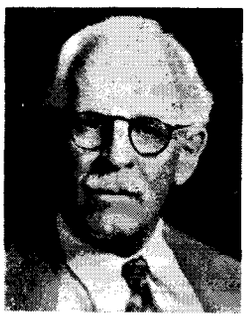
"Very good, that about the hats," he said as he handed it back to me.

Exploring for Plants

THE WORLD WAS MY GARDEN. By David Fairchild. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $3.75.

Reviewed by LOUIS J. HALLE, JR.

MR. FAIRCHILD was, for more than twenty years, head of the division of Foreign Plant Exploration and Introduction of the Department of Agriculture and it is probably fair to say that he has permanently changed the face of this land more than any statesman we have produced; there are few of us, if any, who have not literally tasted the fruits of his labor. One stands a little in awe of such an achievement, as one stands in awe of the achievements of Burbank. Isn't it flying in the face of Nature, this creation of new fruits and flowers, this mixing up of the world flora, this transportation of plants from Africa and Asia to bloom among our native corn and sweet potatoes? Prometheus was tortured for precisely this kind of thing. It is doubtful, however, that anyone could find serious fault with the form of internationalism which Mr. Fairchild practised. The world was his garden, and as a result we now enjoy some of its most exotic fruits and flowers without stirring from our homes. He represents science at its best, and not one of his contributions will explode in our hands or blow the roof off over our heads. (The object which looks like a hand-grenade, in the photograph of the author at his desk, is nothing more than a succulent fruit with which he has probably just returned from the Cannibal Isles or Cathay.)



David Fairchild

Mr. Fairchild's plant explorations over a period of more than a generation took him to almost every part of the known world, and, though the writing is not lively, the account of these explorations is worth reading for the actual adventure involved as well as for the light it throws on a romantic profession. The unwitting self-portrait is another reason for reading it. A man of passionate innocence and integrity, he has always been absorbed in his professional work to the exclusion of almost everything else. This is a career to be envied, for its devotion to the good and for the many fruits it has borne, including this autobiography of almost five hundred pages lavishly illustrated with excellent photographs of the author's garden.

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Off Stage and On

(*Continued from page 4*)

differs from other members of the audience in the privilege he has of printing his opinion in a public place. As a matter of fact, he is a good deal more temperate and judicial than most experienced theatergoers. Being the representative of a large public, he cannot indulge his personal whims freely: he must try to look at a play from the point of view of the public for whom it is intended. Being responsible first to the public and second to the theater, he is not a free agent. He cannot use the theater to promote his private career as a newspaper writer.

If theater people regard reviews with everything from terror to hatred, it is only fair to add that the reviewer regards the box office importance of criticism as a professional liability and something over which he has no control. As a critic he is under bond to put it out of mind altogether. Being interested in the art of the theater and the culture of the modern world, he must close his mind to the fact that what he writes in line of duty has repercussions in the business offices and personal exchequers of theater people. It is not the sort of influence he wants. He has never asked for it; he can console himself by believing that it is recklessly overestimated by excitable people. I know that it is, for on several occasions I have tried to herald the merits of fine plays that the public has neglected; and the results have ranged from meager to negative. The public cannot be driven into the theater.

Whether general newspaper comment on the theater is criticism or reviewing is a point I have never settled in my own mind. We enjoy by tradition the imposing title of "dramatic critics." But our function on a daily newspaper is that of specialized reporting. The opening of a new play is news: we report the news. But since the news is largely bound up with the merit of the play, and the merit is a matter of opinion, our reporting is not only factual but opinionated. The reporting is not objective but subjective. The news value of the play usually depends upon our subjective evaluation of the play's quality. But I am not sure that the mere fact that we express an opinion gives us a right to the illustrious title of "critic." For criticism in the sense that Sainte-Beuve, Matthew Arnold, and Georg Brandes practised it involves a good deal more study of sources than we have time to do.

It is risky for a newspaper reviewer to lose the audience point of view. On one occasion Jed Harris and I agreed to take that risk, for both of us had something to lose. I was to read the script and attend many of the rehearsals of his next production, although I was not to write my review until after the opening performance, as usual. In due course, I went to a rehearsal on a Sunday afternoon when the actors were sufficiently ready with two acts for a run-through. But that was the end of the experiment as far as I was concerned. The play was Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." Sitting alone in the darkness and silence of the auditorium I was tremendously moved by what I saw, for it was my sort of play. As a matter of fact it was too close to my heart to risk experimenting with. When the first part of the rehearsal was over, and the actors went out for a bite to eat, I told Mr. Harris that I was still willing to experiment on a play I wanted to review with the exuberance of an amateur. I wanted to have it fresh and warm in mind at the moment I sat down to my desk and began searching for the crucial first line. After the opening performance had taken place and I had written my notice, I read several versions of the script with the emendations and changes that Mr. Wilder had made while the rehearsals were going on. That was an interesting study; it gave insight into performance. But I am bound to say that it did not change my impressions of what I had seen on the opening night, and furthermore, it did not seem worth discussing in the *Times*. It was technical evidence of preliminary workmanship. But the public had already seen the best of "Our Town" at the opening performance. In the case of "Our Town" I was quite content to be a reviewer.

But there is more than technical inquiry to criticisms. Criticism is also philosophy. It is the expression of a point of view, not merely towards an isolated play, but towards the world in general. It can throw light, not only on plays, but on life. It can create standards. It can stand for principles. It can be as much a form of art as the material it is discussing. Sometimes it is the kind of work Anatole France had in mind when he described it as the adventures of the soul among masterpieces. Masterpieces are rare, but they happen occasionally. That is the time when the first sentence pops spontaneously out of the midnight air, and the first-night review rolls off as slick as grease. Even the reader is in luck on those glowing occasions. He either chuckles or grows angry over destructive reviews; what he really likes is the salute and the serenade. The negative side of drama reviewing is a chore for everyone in and out of the theater, but the positive side puts everyone in radiant spirits.

The foregoing article by the dramatic critic of the New York Times *will, in expanded form, constitute a chapter in "We Saw It Happen," a symposium by twelve correspondents of the* Times, *to be published by Simon & Schuster.*

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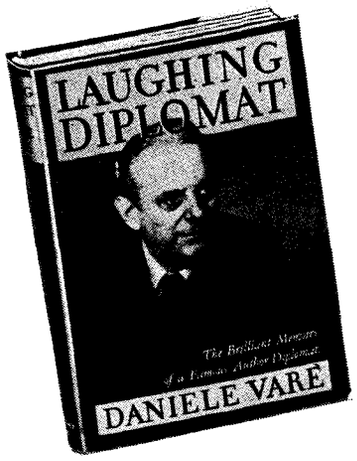

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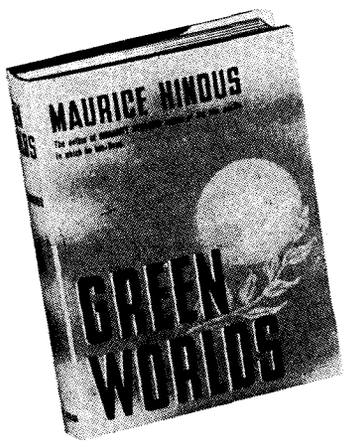

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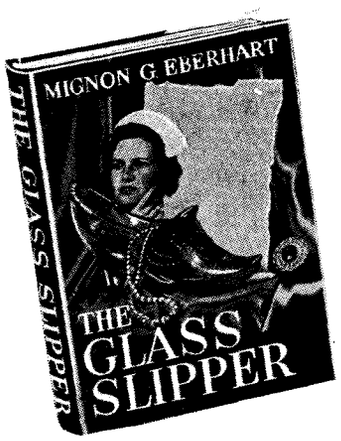

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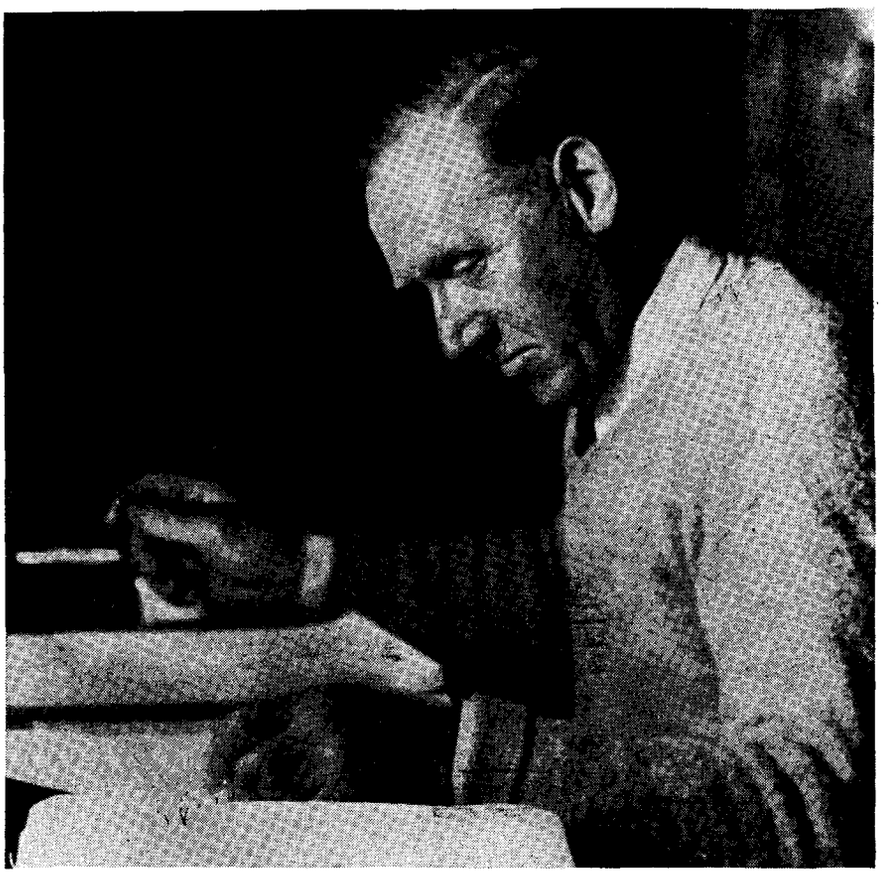

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In Middle Europe

GUNS OR BUTTER. By R. H. Bruce Lockhart. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1938. $3.

DURING the past two years Mr. Bruce Lockhart visited Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany, and lectured in Holland, Scandinavia, and the Balkans under the auspices of the British Council, an institution designed to promote British cultural relations abroad and subsidized by the government. His report of these journeys emphasizes the democracy and social progress of northwestern Europe, the economic development of the Balkan countries, and the militarism of Nazi Germany. The author urges his British public to realize the necessity of restoring national prestige and good will in each of these areas. Guns are being preferred to butter not only by Field Marshal Goering, but also by the leaders of many smaller countries within the orbit of German influence. Mr. Bruce Lockhart, like many British statesmen and publicists, is impressed by the adroitness of the Nazi rulers and the might of their new empire, but is less optimistic than many of his fellow countrymen concerning a possible Anglo-German reconciliation.

Despite the title of his book, however, Mr. Bruce Lockhart is more interested in people than in guns and butter. Some of his famous personages—such as Dr. Colijn of Holland, Premier Stojadinovic and the sculptor Mestrovic of Jugoslavia, King Carol and the late Dowager Queen Marie of Rumania, and King Boris of Bulgaria—emerge from these pages with remarkable vividness. The author, always at his best as a raconteur, introduces many sprightly stories and native jokes. These many virtues are spoiled—for this reviewer, at least—by the general "Lucius Beebe Abroad" effect. There are just too many detailed references to lavish dinners by titled diplomats, smiles and roses from princesses, and railway station embraces by presidents of senates.

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John Strachey on the New Deal

HOPE IN AMERICA. By John Strachey. Modern Age. 1938. 50 *cents.*

Reviewed by ROBERT C. BROOKS

IN the 60,000 words making up this little book there is no advocacy of violence. The nearest approach to anything of the sort is the statement that a progressive government should reserve the right to "the quick, short decisive use of force in order to prevent the overthrow of democracy." So far as we are concerned the likelihood of resort even to this restricted type of violence is canceled out by the statement that America will never turn to fascism or war.

Those who regard Mr. Strachey as a dangerous "red" will not be able to quote "Hope in America" against him. Neither can it be said that the arguments advanced in the book are particularly novel or striking. From a point of view common to liberals generally he discusses democracy, capitalism, imperialism, militarism, communism, and fascism—all with sweet reasonableness and the utmost simplicity. The author presents the achievements of Soviet Russia in too roseate a light; in particular his defense of Stalin's blood purge is not convincing. The confessions of Rakovsky and Bukharin which he quotes at some length are much too literary to ring true. One may question also the statement that both communists and socialists are absolutely willing to abide by the democratic system.

Although holding that it does not go far enough, Mr. Strachey takes a strongly favorable view of the New Deal in the United States. It is ironical that a man so friendly to Mr. Roosevelt's policies should now be facing deportation at the hands of federal officials.

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The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE GLASS SLIPPER *Mignon G. Eberhart* (Crime Club: $2.)	Chicago nurse marries Dr. whose dead wife was her "case." Poison rumors rise and death strikes while assorted detectives snoop.	Good mystery over-diluted with sentiment—which many may enjoy. No lack of suspense, and finish sets pulse a-racing.	Satisfactory
CHALLENGE TO THE READER *Editor: Ellery Queen* (Stokes: $2.)	25 shorts by famous mystographers, with authors' names omitted and sleuths renamed for guessing purposes.	All good stories, and some new to anthologies. Idea ingenious, and—sop to reader—not too hard to guess.	Enjoyable
THE DEATH SYNDICATE *Judson P. Philips* (Washburn: $2.)	Super-diabolical N. Y. gang busted by girl whose play-boy ex-hubby gave her detective agency. He helps considerably.	So swiftly paced and action-packed that reader overlooks improbabilities, impossibilities, and melodramatic preposterousness.	A-1 thriller
THE WHISPERING EAR *Clyde B. Clason* (Crime Club: $2.)	Revengeful twin of successful author poisoned in Hollywood. Writer's ex-wife also dies. Prof. Theocritus Westborough eruditely unravels curious tangle.	Slightly indigestible combination of California cultism and toxicology—with some good moments, and an ending that is very puzzling indeed.	Uneven
THREE BRIGHT PEBBLES *Leslie Ford* (Farrar & Rinehart: $2.)	Scion on lavish Md. estate gets arrow through neck, another murdered before local talent spots killer.	Slightly implausible set-up counterbalanced by excellent characterizations, action, verve, and wit.	Good reading
BANBURY BOG *Phoebe Atwood Taylor* (Norton: $2.)	Proper quota of likely suspects, not too completely concealed (or believable) killer, some quaint Cape Codders, and Asey functioning effortlessly.	Baker-benefactor of Weesit accused of distributing poisoned tarts. Asey Mayo clears him and pierces dense fog to find double slayer.	Satisfactory

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Life Up North

ARCTIC JOURNEYS. By Edward Shackleton. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1938. $3.50.

THE CAPTAIN'S CHAIR. By Robert Flaherty. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by MARIE AHNIGHITO PEARY

IT is difficult for me to give an unbiassed opinion of Mr. Shackleton's volume. For those in search of adventures, the book may perhaps seem disappointing. But, as my father and Stefansson have both pointed out, adventures in the field of exploration are a mark of inefficiency. "Arctic Journeys" is an intensely interesting story of youth, eager, earnest, scientifically trained.

The expedition it describes, sponsored by Oxford University and the Royal Geographical Society, was composed of men whose previous work had been in the tropics. The average age of its members was twenty-three. Instead of the rashness, recklessness, and grave mistakes which would seem to be the logical results of so much youth and inexperience, the book is a record of clear-headedness, good sportsmanship, and no small amount of scientific accomplishment.

The party remained in Greenland a year, with headquarters at Etah. Their objective was the exploration, mapping, and geological study of the little known interior of Ellesmere Land. The story is told with humor and enthusiasm and will be a joy to all those interested in the Arctic, its traditions and its development.

"The Captain's Chair" was frankly a disappointment. Perhaps a knowledge of the very real and important achievements of Mr. Flaherty led one to expect too much. The first-hand accounts of the Eskimos, their customs and their beliefs, are interesting but not outstanding. So, too, with the stories of the captains of the Hudson's Bay Company's supply ships.

Possibly the author's plan for the book changed after the work was well under way. For there are several chapters in the beginning devoted to the story of the mysterious islands far out in the sea; native legends concerning them; and finally, the determination to search for them. And then—no more. Yet Mr. Flaherty did eventually discover these islands and add them to the chart. His account of this discovery would be of more interest and importance than the slight stories which comprise "The Captain's Chair."

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 241)

R. BRIDGES—TESTAMENT OF BEAUTY

Verily if Hope were not itself a happiness
Sorrow would far outweigh our mortal joy, but Hope
Incarnate in the blood kindleth its hues no less
With every breath, to flood all the sluices of life
Long as the heart can beat.

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The New Books

Biography

THE POETICAL CAREER OF ALEXANDER POPE. By Robert Kilburn Root. Princeton University Press. 1938. $2.50.

One finds in this book the root and stalk, but not quite the flower, of literary scholarship. The scope of the work is historical and critical. Historically it is excellent — accurate, well-proportioned, "sound." After first giving an analysis of neoclassical principles and the nature of the heroic couplet, Dean Root proceeds to a moderately detailed discussion of the main periods of the career of Pope and the works relating to each. He blares forth no important new discoveries, but by redefining issues and redistributing emphases he quietly adds to our knowledge of Pope. Particularly useful are the chapters on the couplet and on Pope as translator.

"In every work regard the writer's end," saith Pope. We suspect that Dean Root's main "end" was to write a good old-fashioned piece of historical scholarship. Yet a preface also avows his intention of furnishing an "interpretation and fresh appraisal . . . of Pope's art." In this aspect of his work he is less happy. In fact he says very little about the art of Pope. His page is so fretted with names, dates, titles, and line references that there is scant space for the author's own opinions. We learn what Swift thought and what Johnson said, but not often enough what Root thinks. This book is factually strong but critically undistinguished. It is in effect a good, a very good, handbook on Pope.

A. C.

Fiction

YOUNG DOCTOR GALAHAD. By Elizabeth Seifert. Dodd, Mead. 1938. $2.50.

This novel is the happy winner of an annual $10,000 prize. The reviewing of a prize novel is always a more or less ticklish business. The very fact that it has been adjudged worth a large sum of money is likely to arouse in the envious reviewer a *show-me* attitude that may well convert a tolerant commentator into a bristling critic. So let us admit at once that while to our mind, this is only a fairly interesting story, no better and no worse than dozens the women's magazines publish each year, it may be a far greater masterpiece than we recognize.

Anthony McNaill, nicknamed half-derisively, half-tenderly Doctor Galahad, is a handsome and idealistic young Canadian, "with a little blue blood thrown in," who comes to a small Missouri town as assistant resident in a privately owned hospital. He falls afoul of jealous, backbiting doctors, gossiping old maids, small town snobs, and sex in the form of the community's semi-respectable fast girl. When all seems lost, he is reëstablished by his masterful work with the child victims of a school-bus accident, finds himself unexpectedly married to the daughter of the inevitably crooked banker, and we leave him as he is about to launch a a scheme for coöperative medical service.

Now there is not a thing wrong with this story except the obviousness of its plot pattern, and that the characters are types rather than people, and types we have met again and again. Darcey, the mid-western town, is certainly more dispiritingly vulgar than any community this reviewer has ever met in the flesh, but only in the degree of its unpleasantness does it differ from dozens that followed "Main Street." Nevertheless to the large audience whose interest in the medical profession seems to be insatiable, Mrs. Seifert's first-hand knowledge of hospital wards, operating rooms, and the backstage manners of doctors, will carry the story. And there may still be readers who find in the injection of abortions and syphilis into a novel an indication of its originality.

In justice to author and judges it should be added that the contest was limited to first novels. That does make a difference.

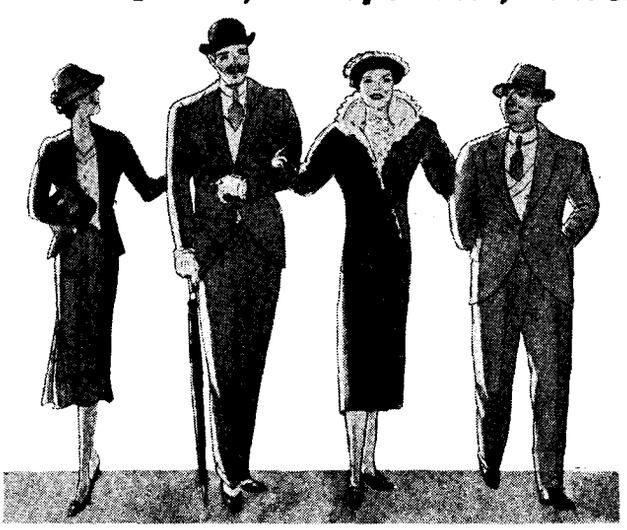
M. S. U.

THE NOISE OF THEIR WINGS. By MacKinlay Kantor. Coward-McCann. 1938. $2.50.

Admirers of MacKinlay Kantor at his best—in "The Voice of Bugle Ann," for instance—are bound to be disappointed by this present novel, which, throughout most of its length, has the style with little of the thrill of a routine thriller, and in other parts is marred by a cloudy poeti-

"I should place it among the best of the Walpole novels"

—FOREST REID, *The Spectator, London*



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cal prose that, at Kantor's worst, becomes completely unintelligible. This is especially unfortunate because the novel has a theme that might inspire a writer to grandeur: the return of the passenger pigeon which, in the time of our fathers, darkened the skies for days on end with its numbers.

E. D. Starke, eccentric elderly millionaire of this story, has offered a prize of one hundred thousand dollars to anyone who will present him with a living pair of *Ectopistes migratorius*, supposed to have been extinct since 1914. The prize goes to a Florida cracker who is completely and promptly demoralized by his sudden wealth. This gives E. D. the aspect of a cold-blooded villain who sacrifices human values to his purely avian interest, and it supplies Mr. Kantor with a somewhat tenuous moral for his tale. In addition, there are a boy and a girl and the routine of true love on the coast of Florida.

No one should quarrel with a good novelist's occasional pot-boiler, if it is frankly that and nothing more. But here Mr. Kantor also goes in for a peculiar and highfaluting form of prose that seems to have been gaining ground lately, especially in American nature-writing; it is exemplified in such passages as the one describing a pigeon migration, where, for example, he writes that the sky "stretched in elastic reception, and let itself grow black with the welcoming." Such poetical conceits, unaccompanied by any specific description and following one another in succession for the length of several chapters, are manifestly below Mr. Kantor's best level.

L. J. H., Jr.

THE MANDRAKE ROOT. By Martha Ostenso. Dodd, Mead. 1938. $2.50.

Martha Ostenso, in her new novel, has helped herself to a story which seemed striking and original when Eugene O'Neill told it in "Strange Interlude" but which with each repetition freezes into more completely bleak and monotonous familiarity. In this version it is Lydie Clarence who wants a child and knows that she cannot expect to have one as the fulfillment of her marriage. Andrew, her husband, is a vaguely mystic creature who hopes to save his Minnesota farming community from its frustrations and resentments through a tepid variation on the Oxford movement. But his saintly mind and unfortunate body are alike sterile.

When Eric Stene, Andrew's landlord, comes home to his land to give himself a holiday from the petty persecutions and nagging uncertainties of the intellectual world in which he has lived as a teacher, Lydie takes him as her lover. Miss Ostenso's interpretation of Lydie's character is that she is "tenderly ruthless." A less polite and admiring statement of it might be that she is monstrously, theatrically, and quite unbelievably detached from the consequences of her conduct.

In the background of Miss Ostenso's story are a number of rural characters, living pathetically through the crises of labor struggles, unemployment, and emotional starvation. But the three central characters seem not to belong to this milieu at all. With their tortured subtleties of feeling, their brittle wit, their passion for Chopin preludes and literary conversation, they seem like exotics transplanted from the world of drawing-room tragicomedy. In a different setting they might have seemed more plausible. Miss Ostenso has tried to be O. E. Rölvaag and Michael Arlen at the same time. The effort was predestined to failure.

J. G.

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Poetry

THE FOX OF PEAPACK. By E. B. White. Harpers. 1938. $2.

What makes a man a humorous versifier? E. B. White, prose commentator of the *New Yorker* and now of *Harper's*, admits a revealing influence of his youth: "There was an iron vase on the lawn and a copy of 'Wet Days at Edgewood' on the library table." Mr. White has summed the whole thing up in a couplet:

A man can stand just so much chintz
Before he will wince.

With a Stein on the table, also—see "Is a Train"—and many a good song ringing clear, not to mention many a fine ballad with unexpected turns, like the title poem, this book should be a necessity to anyone who likes excellent light verse, nonsense verse, and parody. Poems like that on Rivera and Rockefeller, the Six Day Bicycle Racer, and Fiorello the Jungle Flower, are just about perfect; and "Street Corner on a Lesser Doomsday" is as original modern verse as most of the boys can turn out. Also in section five there are several musings that rise beyond verse into poetry. You may prefer the poems to a small son, and, incidentally, the riposte addressed to Ogden Nash and his small daughter. In any case, here is a book of great variety and originality in a difficult art.

W. R. B.

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

FOR anyone who knows the charm of Philadelphia, the perfect gift is Cornelius Weygandt's *Philadelphia Folks* (Appleton-Century.) It's a delightful well-savored book, to be cherished among those who have enjoyed the comfortable squirearchies of the City of Squaretoes and Scrapple. ☞Mr. Weygandt "put plenty of eats" in his sketches; also a pleasant tribute to Leary's bookstore. The only rarity he ever found there was a first of Whittier's *Snowbound* for 5 cents, but he thinks he caught scarlet fever from it. ☞His best book bargains have been in the clearance sales at department stores: in 1900 he found a first of *Shropshire Lad* for 25 cents. He has since been offered $225 for it. ☞Speaking of odd little books, recent hullabaloo about Wells's *War of the Worlds* reminded us of a very scarce parody of it many years ago: *The War of the Wenuses* by E. V. Lucas and C. L. Graves—"translated from the Artesian." In this agreeable skit the earth is invaded by attractive females from the planet Venus. ☞Dr. W. R. Dunton Jr. says that our correspondent who "scoured the bookshops of Baltimore" for a *Pilgrim's Progress* wasn't a very good scourer. Dr. Dunton knows for a fact that the Peabody Bookshop (913 N. Charles St., Baltimore) has four copies, two with old imprints. ☞Frank Crowninshield has written an enthusiastic foreword to *Sky Hooks,* (Lippincott) the life of John Kane, the Scottish day-laborer in Pittsburgh "who emerged at the age of 67 as the most significant painter America has produced during the past quarter-century." ☞This remarkable book (told by Marie McSwigan) would be good medicine for anyone who holds strictly conventional views about art. ☞On October 31 President Roosevelt signed an executive order setting a flat postal rate on books of 1½c a pound, for all domestic mailings. The order continues to June 30, 1939, when it will come up for renewal.

☞Another gift suggestion: study the lists sent out by the United French Publishers, 1819 Broadway, N. Y. C. For instance the first sections of the long-awaited *Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises*—which will be complete in 90 parts of 64 pp. each, requiring 9 years to publish—are announced for November. For lovers of both poetry and music, *La Chanson en Angleterre au Temps d'Elisabeth* (by G. Bontoux) has attracted much attention. ☞If you wanted to startle some pseudo-sophisticate, try the *Théâtre Complet* of Leonormand. ☞Or that superb series of French classics, Bibliothèque de la Pleiade—e.g. Ronsard complete (2 vols) for 210 francs. ☞William McFee, as a professional marine engineer, was grieved by some of the technical details in Richard Hughes' *In Hazard.* In his review in the *Sun,* Mac says "Whoever took Mr. Hughes around a ship forgot to tell him about the fuel-oil settling tanks, and that capsizes nearly all his engine-room description." ☞Among kindly ideas for Santa Claus, there's that courageous little booklet *On Being Eighty* written by a fine old lady, Mrs. Charlotte Reeve Conover, who has found that neither old age nor blindness are impediments to her fine spirits. This is published (25c) by that intrepid outfit the Antioch Bookplate Co., of Yellow Springs, Ohio. ☞Frances Barnes of Cincinnati contributes to our collection of unusual slogans one used by Anderson's Laundry in St. Louis, "The slowest laundry on earth." They use a tortoise as a trade-mark. ☞Slogans remind us, Logan Pearsall Smith's *Unforgotten Years* has been postponed until the New Year: but you can put in the time reading Mr. Smith's *Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* written long ago but recently revived among a few librovores. We happen to know that Miss Dodd at the Hampshire Bookshop (Northampton, Mass.) has laid in a few copies for connoisseurs.

☞Good old Frank Case, of the Algonquin Hotel, admits in his genial autobiography *Tales of a Wayward Inn* that he doesn't like the general effect of the news-stand in his lobby, with so many bawdy covers on the Fleshly School of magazines. ☞But the newsman retorts "They sell," and Frank Case says "I pretend to be so engrossed in the SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE that I didn't hear what he said." ☞A little startled to find in an anthology *Notable Short Stories,* edited by Raymond McFarland, (Macmillan, 1937) the statement that T. B. Aldrich wrote *Peck's Bad Boy.* This is a big-time howler: it was written by George W. Peck (1840-1916) who was later mayor of Milwaukee and governor of Wisconsin. ☞Aldrich's *Story of a Bad Boy* is something quite different.

For readers who liked* SEVEN GOTHIC TALES, *a curiously timely novel not easy to forget . . .

"NOT too long ago," comments the Detroit *Free Press,* "there was a brief dispatch from Germany about the execution — which means the beheading — of two women, presumably spies. One recalls that little item as he finishes reading *The Silver Fox,* and must wonder if Réné Hansard, who wrote this book, has really told an inside story, or has built this strange tale from a newspaper paragraph and a rich imagination."

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The Silver Fox

by RÉNÉ HANSARD

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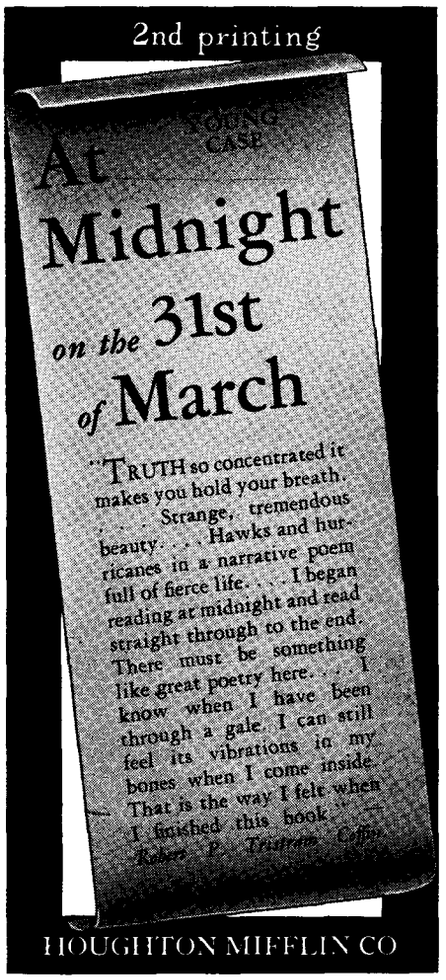
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27-J	28-P		29-O	30-G	31-X	32-H	33-F	34-L	35-B		36-Y	37-E	38-Q	39-G	40-A	41-N
42-C	43-U	44-W	45-O		46-P	47-D		48-E	49-B	50-F	51-K		52-B	53-J		54-E
55-V	56-Y	57-A	58-D	59-K		60-X	61-A	62-E	63-M	64-T	65-K		66-M	67-D	68-R	69-C
	70-R	71-A		72-M	73-E		74-P	75-R		76-F	77-J	78-I	79-O	80-L		81-Q
82-E		83-G	84-I	85-W	86-R	87-X	88-H	89-C		90-O	91-T		92-T	93-K	94-D	95-J
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165-I	166-C	167-J	168-W		169-P	170-U		171-G	172-X	173-K	174-T	175-W		176-K	177-M	178-B

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 18 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Place or scene of slaughter.

B. Hero of a German drama to Mary Anderson's Parthenia.

C. Characterized by umbrage.

D. Music drama by Wagner.

E. Deprivation of one's money by compulsion (sl.).

F. Unexpected.

G. Digressed.

H. Crackbrained (sl.).

I. Ulysses's swineherd (Odyssey).

J. Pertaining to the early part of life.

K. Beset with mental conflict.

L. Son of Seth—905 yrs. old.

M. Fleeting.

N. A French railway.

O. English philosopher (1642-1727).

P. Poem by Coleridge.

Q. Sends forth.

R. Father of Antigone.

S. Quarrel.

T. Novel by Cooper.

U. Inventor of safety brake for passenger elevators.

V. Showed strong feeling (jocose).

W. Foils (noun, sl.).

X. Adorned with figures.

Y. Prepares for publication.

WORDS

99	140	61	40	122	108	57	71		
1	151	35	52	178	49	16			
128	104	97	89	69	42	147	115	166	
67	162	58	47	107	25	125	94		
37	156	96	62	144	54	73	48	82	
33	6	24	76	150	50	157	100	10	
130	39	158	98	171	30	8	139	83	
126	119	32	88	14					
84	17	133	165	78	21	110			
149	77	167	146	101	53	27	95		
164	173	145	59	105	93	127	65	176	51
12	34	3	80						
4	66	152	63	72	177	11	109		
23	136	41	137						
116	129	29	79	90	45				
19	138	28	46	131	169	160	74	123	148
159	124	81	38	135					
68	75	117	154	86	70	120			
103	18	134	2						
92	20	111	9	91	141	64	174	102	113
170	121	43	22						
163	118	132	155	55	7				
168	106	44	26	142	175	85			
87	31	153	13	114	172	112	143	60	
36	161	5	15	56					

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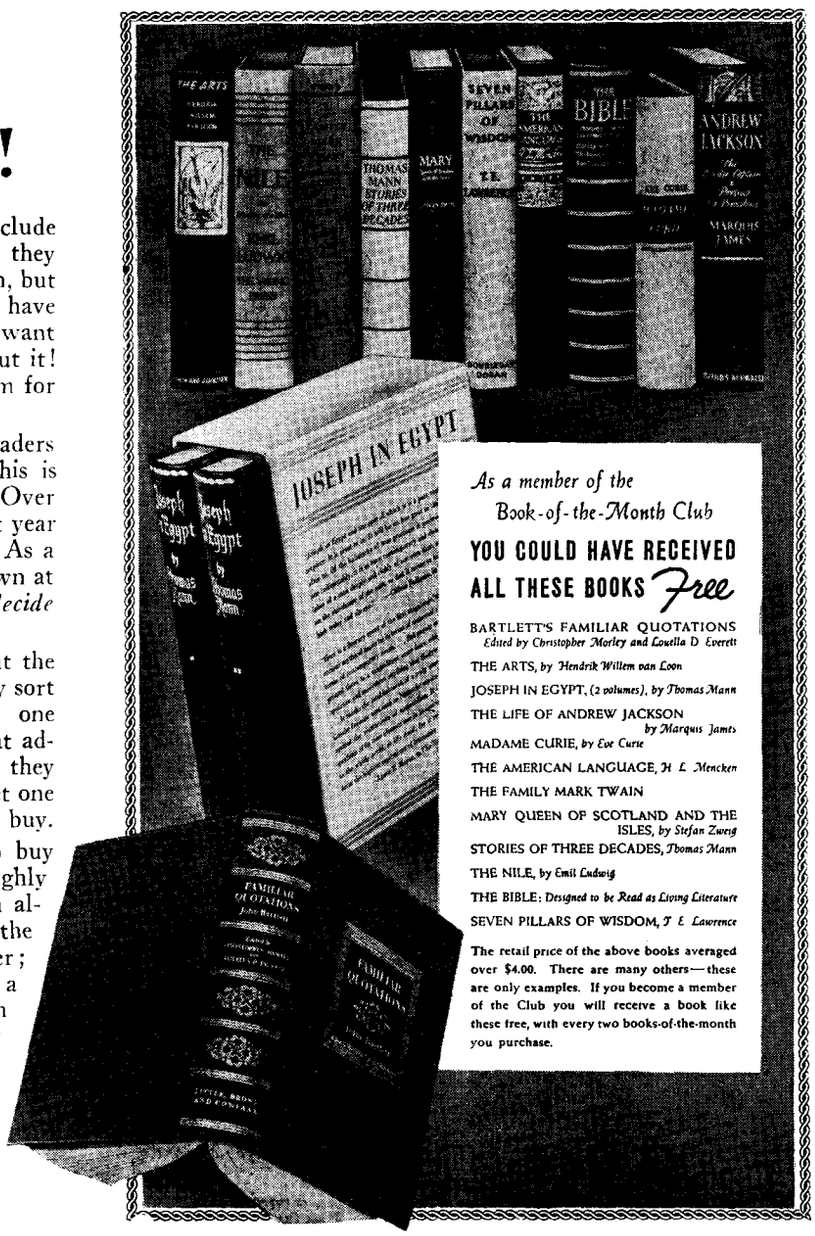
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